

Note for Record

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Subject: - Sojourn Abroad

An invitation on behalf of Ambassador Zamir Akram, Chair Rapporteur of the Working Group on the Right to Development, to make a presentation on the implementation and realization of the Right to Development, at an interactive dialogue of Geneva based UN Human Rights High Commissioner's Office, on April 24, 2018, got coupled with a meeting at Brussels with EU Director Asia and seven of his officials, on April 27 followed by an invitation to participate in a Panel Discussion on empowerment of women on the European Day on June 6 again at Brussels, resulted in the Sojourn Abroad.

At the dialogue, I posed the question when we talk about Right to Development, whose right we are talking about?

20% of the World population consumes 80% of global resources. The poorest 20% only account for 1.3% of global resources. The majority of the deprived live in rural areas of the developing countries. In South Asia the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) set up a Commission for Poverty Alleviation, which made an overarching recommendation that the centerpiece of a policy framework for poverty alleviation has to be the mobilisation of the poor, in order to enable them to participate directly in the decisions that affect their lives and prospects.

The Commission argued that the existing Administrative and Political Pillars of the State have no capacity to engage all or overwhelming majority of the people especially the vulnerable or the poor in planning, implementing and monitoring their own development.

The Commission recommended fostering of a third Pillar to fulfill Lincoln's dream: Democracy OF the people BY the people and FOR the people. The Administrative and Political Pillars are By the people and For the people but the missing link is institutions OF the people. The Commission recommended to Governments of South Asia, which SAARC Summit endorsed, that for building institutions of the poor, governments should support financially and administratively the establishment of independent non-governmental and national level support mechanism to catalyse formation of organisations, as social guidance required to achieve this objective, cannot be undertaken by government departments or traditional NGOs. It requires an institutional mechanism which has the resources of the government and flexibility of an NGO and the examples they gave were of Pakistan's Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) and the Government of Pakistan financed National Rural Support Programme (NRSP).

With the support of UNDP and World Bank between Pakistan and India, there are over 18 million organised households of the rural poor comprising nearly 90 million population. In 2011 India launched National Rural Livelihoods Mission to organise 70 million households reaching 350 million population.

The South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme launched by UNDP in 1994, as a sequel to SAARC Commission's report set up demonstrations of Support Organisations besides India in Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka also. The Aga Khan Development Network has introduced the concept of the missing pillar in eight countries of Africa and Asia.

Social Mobilisation is a holistic approach including human resources development, credit and savings and an interest free community investment fund, technical assistance in natural resource management, development of local level physical infrastructure and linkage of the institutions of the poor with government departments, local councils, NGOs, commercial and development agencies.

Social Mobilisation is a proven approach to the achievement of Right to Development of the rural poor and speediest investment to the achievement of SDGs. The officials of the High

Commissioner's Office commended me on giving a practical example how the concept of Right to Development can be operationalised.

Prior to the dialogue, a luncheon was hosted by Pakistan's Ambassador and Permanent Representative at Geneva UN Mission Farukh Amil, in honour of Ambassador Zamir Akram attended by Ambassadors of China, Cuba, Russia, Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, European Union, Egypt, Lebanon, Kenya, Nigeria and Sri Lanka. I was asked by Farukh Amil to share my experience in the field of development. It was indeed a singular honour for me to be interacting with so many ambassadors on one table.

My visit to Geneva gave me an opportunity to renew my contact with two of my greatest supporters at AKRSP. Bob Shaw, as Director Special Programmes, Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) at Aga Khan Foundation Geneva, head hunting for General Manager AKRSP, reached me in the elephants and cobra infested jungles of Mahaweli in Sri Lanka and to make sure that I got the job, at the interview for the post at Karachi, a couple of hours before the interview forewarned me what sort of questions were being asked from the other candidates by the interview panel. After the selection when I insisted that I will only join the post if UNICEF, with whom I was working in Sri Lanka, agrees to second my services to Aga Khan Foundation Geneva, Bob got even that done getting a letter sent by His Highness to the Executive Director UNICEF James Grant.

Bill Spoelberch was General Manager, AKF Geneva, when I joined AKRSP in December 1982 and met him when His Highness visited Gilgit in May 1983. Thereafter Bill paid many visits to AKRSP and was the staunchest supporter of AKRSP and even till today he remains so and whenever the occasion arises, he strongly supports what AKRSP has done and is doing.

I lost touch with Bob after a decade when he became General Manager of the Foundation and I joined United Nations in 1994, it was a sentimental meeting with Bob and Diane. They were as profusely affectionate as ever and we spent a lovely evening reliving our yester years at dinner hosted by Bob at an Indian Restaurant.

When I contacted Bill, he was delighted and asked me to come to his house for dinner as he wanted me to meet his niece Zoe, a university student interested in development and I offered her a carte blanche for an internship with Rural Support Programmes including AKRSP, whenever she has the time and wishes to do so.

Bill and I reminisced and I reminded how he arranged for me to meet His Highness in his Paris home to seek permission from him to accept the UNDP offer and leave AKRSP. I also requested Bill to help AKRSP in getting over its current resource crunch. For me it was a most pleasant and enjoyable evening.

To have met Bill and Bob in Geneva brought back memories of the golden period of my 65 years of working career. Their contribution in making it so immensurable and I shall remain indebted to them and His Highness till my last breath.

CEO NRSP Dr. Rashid Bajwa, who was also invited to Right to Development dialogue and I left for Brussels to join CEOs RSPN, SRSP, BRSP and Chairperson SRSP for a meeting with European Union officials. The meeting had been arranged at the behest of EU Ambassador in Pakistan His Excellency Jean Francois Cautain to explain and apprise the EU Director Asia, the rationale for EU support to RSPN/RSPs.

Director Asia, Central Asia, Middle East/Gulf and Pacific Pierre Amilhat met us along with Frank Hess, Deputy Head of Unit Devco, Maria Manuela Cabral, Head of Unit Fragility and Resilience Micha Ramakers, Head of Sector South Asia, Barbara Riksen, International Aid/Cooperation Officer, Maurizio Leonardi, Finance & Audit and another official who joined us during the meeting.

I made a PowerPoint presentation about RSPs, how these are distinguished from traditional NGOs, having been mostly sponsored and funded by Federal and Provincial Governments in accordance with the recommendation of the Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation and endorsed by Heads of Government comprising South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

CEO RSPN Shandana Khan described the achievements and progress of RSPs followed by CEO SRSP Masoodul Mulk who gave a pictorial PowerPoint presentation of the achievements of EU supported PEACE project in Malakand Division. Chairperson SRSP Munawar Humayun described the trauma through which PEACE area went through under Taliban occupation especially the women and how critical continuation of PEACE is for them. CEO NRSP Rashid Bajwa described the different dimensions of RSPs benefiting the rural poor. CEO BRSP explained the special nature of problems facing Balochistan in terms of geography, isolation, dispersed population over a large area and lack of public sector services and supplies.

Director Amilhat heard us patiently for over two hours and reacted most positively to whatever we presented to him. Being a great friend of Ambassador Cautain, he appreciated what EU was doing in Pakistan. All other EU officials seemed equally interested and impressed what they heard from us and positively reacted. We all came out euphoric from the meeting.

For the first time I boarded Eurostar for the day visit to Brussels from London to participate in the Panel Discussion on Gender Transformative Approaches, organised by European Union, on June 6 European Day. EU was showcasing its development work world over and in a huge area nearly hundred stalls including one by RSPN, had been set up manned by a team from Pakistan led by CEO RSPN Shandana Khan comprising RSPN Manager EU Programme in Sindh Fazal Saadi, SRSO EU Programme Manager Jamal Shoro and a woman village leader Nadia Junejo. I was happy to learn that our staff attracted lot of attention from the 8,000 people who participated in the EU day celebrations over two days and even Director Asia Amilhat visited it. Besides the Pakistan Ambassador Ms Naghmana Hashmi, Minister Information Ms Syeda Sultana, Minister Economic Mr. Omar Hameed greatly encouraged RSPN team including hosting a dinner by the Ambassador.

The Panel Discussion was meticulously organised with a rehearsal, which I missed and a pre-meeting before the Discussion which I was able to attend. There were six panelists from Israel, Pakistan, Finland, Kenya, Cameroon and IFPRI Washington DC. The moderator was

Deputy Director General of German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. The opening remarks were given by Finland's Ambassador at large for Global Women Issues and Gender Equality with closing remarks being given by Director General European Union.

In the few minutes allotted to me, I said if the objective of the panel discussion is to expand knowledge base around what works and why, in relation to GTA in rural sector, by demonstrating and analyzing different approaches.

65 years ago, when I joined the civil service of Pakistan, the successor of the Indian Civil Service reputed to be the steel framework of the British Empire, I thought I had achieved the ambition of my life but in 1958 I met a visionary practitioner who introduced me to the theory and principles of subsistence holders development and empowerment. He used to call it the Conceptual Package and claimed it was the distillation of the successful initiatives practiced over eleven decades in the world, bringing countries which were poor out of poverty and quoted the German Raiffeissen as the author of the three development principles which help the impoverished to rise above the level of subsistence. Firstly, individually the poor men and women cannot overcome the handicaps from which they suffer, unless they agree to get organised and identify an honest and competent leader from amongst themselves to take their organisation forward; secondly, capital is power and unless they inculcate, even the poorest, to generate their capital through a discipline of savings, they will never be able to attract capital from outside and finally they have to believe in their individual potential hidden in them to unleash it by getting the obstacles removed hindering them, with the help of their organisation.

This Conceptual Package, my mentor Akhter Hameed Khan (AHK) taught me and demonstrated himself in the famous Comilla Project in the then East Pakistan now Bangladesh, in the 1960s through Pakistan Academy for Rural Development, Comilla, set up with Ford Foundation and USAID assistance. The American Professors were surprised and sceptical about this old approach but did not stop AHK from implementing it. He would claim this Conceptual Package was as precise as the law of gravity and trying to help the

impoverished by ignoring this approach is like building crooked walls. Only one leaning tower of Pisa is an example against law of gravity in the whole world.

Detractors of the approach claim that every country, every geographical area needs its own approach. What they are confusing is the Conceptual Package from the Programme Package which includes the kind of interventions the organised communities need.

Over the last 45 years, when I left the civil service and implemented AHK Conceptual Package in diverse geographical, cultural, religious and climatic areas, I found the applicability of the Conceptual Package universal for the subsistence holders. Of course, the women of Andhra Pradesh in India who were earning only ten cent a day weeding fields, identified a different Programme Package than the women of mountainous region of Pakistan who pined for exploiting water from glaciers where only one percent of the land could be irrigated. But in both places, it was only when they followed the conceptual package that they could identify the programme package.

If the objective of the Panel is to find out 'what works'. They should also keep in view the challenge of scale.

In the journal published by the German Ministry of Economic Affairs, D+C (Development & Cooperation) I was struck by a quote that 20% of the world population consumes 80% of global resources. The poorest 20% only account for 1.3% and remaining 60% fall somewhere between 7% to 18%. By a conservative estimate, we are talking of a billion people if not more and women are the most deprived and disempowered amongst them, in rural areas.

The challenge for the panel should be to look at an approach which has demonstrated empowering hundreds of millions.

The approach rural support programme (RSPs) initiated based on the conceptual package in 1982, thanks to His Highness Aga Khan's Geneva based Aga Khan Foundation, later supported by many donors including Germany and Netherlands, which has inspired now in different parts of Pakistan over 7 million households, 52% of these women, comprising 48 million population. In India through UNDP, South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme

(SAPAP) in Andhra Pradesh organised 11 million women led households with World Bank support of the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) reaching 45 million population. In 2011 the Andhra Pradesh demonstration resulted in Indian Planning Commission initiating National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) aiming to reach 70 million women led households comprising 350 million population. The World Bank acclaimed it currently as the largest rural development programme in the world.

Among donors in Pakistan, European Union (EU) has been RSPs staunch supporter. Since 2015 is helping RSPs to mobilise 3 million women in Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pukhtunkhwa reaching nearly 20 million population by 2021. This has influenced Government of Sindh Province to allocate resources to RSPs to cover the entire province in next five years.

After a brief discussion in which I asked Nadia Junejo to describe her experience of empowerment and improving her household, livelihood, the conclusions of the Panel were as follows:

1. Scaling up gender transformative approaches at the local level.
2. Developing an international initiative to implement gender transformative approaches.
3. Working with partner governments to integrate gender transformative approaches across national and subnational sectoral policies.

I was happy to see the Embassy officials attending the Panel Discussion along with Dr. Tauqeer Shah, Pakistan's Permanent Representative at WTO.